

The Sunday School.

LESSON FOR AUGUST 8.

Working and Waiting for Christ. I Thess. 4 : 9—5 : 2.

Golden Text.—If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself.—John 14 : 3.

INSTRUCTION.

Introduction.—Acquaint yourself with all the circumstances of this letter, where it was written, when it was written, to whom it was written, etc. Farrar says "The Epistle has the six features which occur in nearly all of St. Paul's letters to the churches, namely: (1) the greeting, (2) the thanksgiving, (3) a doctrinal section, (4) a practical section, (5) personal messages, (6) a final salutation.

1. Working for Christ's Coming.—To wait for Christ's coming is not to sit down and fold your arms and do nothing. The fact that Christ is coming again should be a strong motive for all who believe in him to labor earnestly to bring the world to Christ. We are not only to prepare ourselves for his coming but we are to help the world for his full advent, the day when he will fill all the world with his gracious presence. Note the exhortation of Paul : 1. Brotherly love of which they have been taught of God. They had already exercised such love and Paul has no need of writing to them because God has taught them. 2. But they are to increase more and more. They were not yet perfect. 3. They were exhorted to study to be quiet. This would be very practical advice for many church members to-day. Less noise and more work is what is needed. 4. They were to attend to their own business. If this advice was heeded now there would be a great deal less trouble in the church, less friction, less quarrelling, etc. 5. They were commanded to work with their own hands. This is what Paul had done. Some of these Thessalonian brethren had expected Christ to come any moment and did not think it necessary to do any work for their support. This same mistake is being made by many people to-day. It is purest fanaticism to neglect even our secular duties because we expect the speedy coming of Christ. We are to go about our duties as if his coming were a thousand years off, but in religious life we are to live as if he were to come at any time. 6. They were to walk honestly before all men, especially toward them that are without. We are not to wait for Christ's coming in mere idleness or in religious meetings. We should be about our daily duties. The coming of Christ is like the death of a Christian, so far as time is concerned, it is in the hands of God, we have

no control over it and should not worry about it.

2. Concerning His Coming.—Paul would not have them ignorant as to the living and the dead in Christ when he does come again. 1. Those who sleep will God bring with him. 2. Those who are alive will not prevent them which are asleep. 3. The dead in Christ shall rise first. 4. The living shall be changed with them.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION.

1. Brotherly Love.—It is indeed a happy church where brotherly love has so far progressed that there is no more need of exhortation in that direction. Paul said, "Ye need not that I write unto you." They knew their duty and did it. Brotherly love manifests itself in many ways. It is not a mere sentiment that exhausts itself in words; it is practical sympathy which shows itself in help to the poor, the afflicted, in bearing one another's burdens. These things we are taught of God and we should daily exercise in them.

2. Growing in Love.—Tho these people were praiseworthy they were not perfect. Paul beseeches them to increase more and more. This is the law of the gospel, grow in grace and in love; increase more and more. There is constant need of this exhortation. We are to go on to perfection. Whatever good may be said of us so far as concerns the exercise of the spirit of love, we should never rest satisfied with what we have already attained. The resources of God's divine love are inexhaustible; let us not be satisfied with anything short of our possibility.

3. Wise Counsel.—Here is some very wise counsel that applies to us no less than it did to the people to whom Paul wrote. 1. Study to be quiet. 2. Do your own business. 3. Work with your own hands. 4. Walk honestly before men. What a blessed thing it would be if these instructions were observed in our daily life. If we could but learn to be quiet and attend to our business instead of trying to attend to other people's business, the world would be much better off. Then too no one should be ashamed to work with his own hands and earn an honest living. Why? Did not the Master give us his own example? Christ dignified labor; he taught that honest labor was honorable. Why should the servant despise it? Is the servant greater than his Master?

4. The Coming Lord.—There is comfort in the fact that the Lord will come again. It gives us the assurance that the Lord will finally triumph, and that he will take us to his home in heaven. It also

gives us the comforting hope of meeting those who have gone before.

HOW MAY THE S. S. C. E. BENEFIT THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL?

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This subject is so plain and easy to understand that it does not need much elaboration, but there are certain suggestions which may be made, not because they are new, but by way of bringing them fresh to mind.

Our first duty is to attend Sunday-school ourselves, and to be careful that we attend in spirit as well as in body. As faith without works is dead, so is attendance on Sunday-school dead if we are there without interest in the work and without energy in the teaching. Spirit and life here are as essential as in any other calling. No member of the S. S. C. E. who desires to be active in the accomplishment of good and the spreading of His glorious kingdom can fail in her attendance at Sunday-school. Not only that, but we should see that our children are there, fully prepared on the lesson, so they may have receptive minds and be able to follow, the more easily, the teacher's instruction. Far too many parents think their part in the work of the Sunday-school is fully accomplished when the children are neatly dressed and sent there. Better less dress and more teaching than all dress and no home teaching. Surely here is a wide field for usefulness.

Another way of giving aid is to increase the attendance, and this is not so much by seeking to find recruits from the ranks of children who regularly attend other schools, as by gathering them in from the by-ways and hedges. Oh! what a field for usefulness there is open here in all our towns and communities, and especially in the towns. Without new levies any army will fail and no less the Sunday-school.

We should be general utility people, ready to extend a helping hand in every department of work. We should be both teachers and pupils, ever willing to teach what we know and understand, and ready to learn what we ourselves do not yet know.

Study to make the Sunday-school so interesting that those who once attend will feel they are suffering a loss when they are not present. You cannot do this if you fail to enlist the pupil's interest. There must be kindly greeting, the hand-shake, and that not the listless kind that chills the spirit by its insufferable indifference. When you shake hands with your pupils hold your heart right in your hand, so that the contact will give life and energy and spirit. Children like to go where